

News Release



California Arts Council

For Immediate Release

October 14, 2008

Number: 08-22

Website: www.cac.ca.gov

Contacts:

Mary Beth Barber

(916) 322-6588

Arts Council joins the First Lady Maria Shriver at the Women's Conference on October 21-22

Highlights include programs from Alameda County Juvenile Justice and Venice Arts; encourage support with the Arts License Plate

SACRAMENTO - The California Arts Council will join First Lady Maria Shriver, California Poetry Out Loud 2008 champion Roshawnda Bettencourt, and an estimated 20,000 Californians at the California Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women on October 21 and 22 at the Long Beach Convention Center. Featured exhibits include quilts created by teenage girls at the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center's Detention Facility, and photographs from Venice Arts, a successful arts program that provides after-school arts programs for at-risk youth.

The Minerva Project, directed by the Alameda County Arts Commission, is the result of a collaboration with the California Arts Council. Teenage girls detained at the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center were asked to create their own interpretations of Minerva, the image on the California state seal and the namesake of the prestigious Minerva Awards. These awards are presented each year at the Women's Conference to five remarkable women who have made exceptional contributions to their communities and society. The artwork focuses on the Roman goddess's qualities of courage, strength and wisdom, and The Minerva Project encouraged the teens to think about these traits in themselves when creating their projects.

"I enjoyed working with the colors because it helps me express how I feel," said one teen artist about the Minerva Project. "I feel like I accomplished and finished something for the first time in a very long time."

First Lady Maria Shriver said, "I believe that each woman is the artist of her own life. My hope is that young girls will be inspired by The Minerva Project to develop qualities they wish to see in themselves."

The mission of the California Arts Council, a state agency, is to advance California through the Arts and Creativity. Members of the California Arts Council include: Chair Michael Alexander, Vice Chair Malissa Feruzzi Shriver, Eunice David, Charmaine Jefferson, Chong-Moon Lee, Fred Sands, Karen Skelton, Susan Steinhauer and William Turner.

California Arts Council
Press Release: Women's Conference 2008
October 15, 2008

On display as well will be exceptional photographs from Venice Arts representing selections of work by youth participating in Venice Arts' Documentary Projects. Venice Arts youth have photographed in Los Angeles and travelled nationally and internationally to explore themes of female identity, race and ethnicity, immigration and the impact of AIDS. Venice Arts' mission is to ignite youths' imagination, mentor their creativity, and expand their sense of possibility through accessible media-based arts programs.

Both programs receive support from the California Arts Council, which supports hundreds of important arts organizations through the agency's Artists in Schools, State-Local Partnership, Creating Public Value and other related programs.

The Conference also features California Poetry Out Loud champion Roshawnda Bettencourt, who will recite her award-winning recitation selections during the Conference program. The state's Poetry Out Loud program is a California Arts Council initiative with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation where high-school students memorize and recite classical poetry in a nation-wide competition. California's Poetry Out Loud is considered a model program nationally, as it has more students and schools involved than any other state.

Many of the California Arts Council's program are made possible through sales and renewals of the Arts License Plate, which provides some 60% of the California Arts Council's budget to support these essential arts organizations and programs for kids and communities. The plate, designed by renowned California artist Wayne Thiebaud and first available in 1994, is the most successful specialty plate dedicated to the arts in the nation.

More information on the individual arts displays, the California Arts Council, and the arts in California follow this release. The California Arts Council will be located in booth # 2020 on the main conference floor, and a portion of the Minerva Project and Venice Arts displays will be in "The Village" section of the main conference hall. Members of the media interested in these arts programs and others may contact Mary Beth Barber, Communications Director for the California Arts Council, at 916-322-6588 or mbarber@caartscouncil.com. Press inquiries about the California Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women in general may be addressed to Marissa Moss and/or Kaity Gonzalez at Griffin|Schake Consultants, (310) 926-7365 or (310) 285-2338, or through the Conference website at www.californiawomen.org.

###

The Minerva Project

Quilts created by teenage girls participating in the Arts Education Program at the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center's Youth Detention Facility

Presented by the Alameda County Arts Commission and the California Arts Council

The qualities of the Roman Goddess Minerva – courage, strength, and wisdom – are infused into the California state seal and the theme of the Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women and Children. Through a unique project in Alameda County, youth detained at the County's Juvenile Justice Center participate in a comprehensive arts education program. For this specific project, teenage girls created their own interpretations of the image of Minerva.

Artist Marion Coleman led this project. Each girl reflected on the characteristics of the goddess Minerva and talked about women who exhibit courage, strength, and wisdom. The youth were encouraged to think about these traits within themselves, and each girl created a design plan on paper for her Minerva piece. The girls selected fabric pieces for the background and the major shapes that reflected their design as well as their individual styles and personalities; each girl designed her own quilt.

Like a traditional quilting bee, in which everyone works collaboratively, the girls completed their own design and conducted the "piecing" (the attachment of the top layer of fabric) while Coleman completed the "quilting" (the sewing through of the top layer, the internal batting and the back panel). During the three weeks in which this project was conducted, over 40 girls participated. Over the course of the project, some girls worked in teams to embellish the artwork initially designed and pieced together by others in the program.

The Minerva Project at the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center is an example of the potential for arts programs to help Juvenile detainees find their own courage, strength, and the wisdom to make positive changes in their lives, and to be leaders in their families and communities.

The California Arts Council is working with arts agencies throughout the state to strengthen our communities by providing funding support to State-Local Partnership grantees like the Alameda County Arts Commission and its Arts Education Program at the Juvenile Justice Center.

The Minerva Project was conducted from September 20-October 10, 2008 at the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center, San Leandro. Minerva Project Instruction by Marion Coleman, Artist. Minerva Project Management by Rachel Osajima, Alameda County Arts Commission. Documentary Still Photography by Ruth Morgan, Director of Community Works West. Documentary Video by Maggie Simpson, Decomp Film Productions. Photography of Artwork by Sibila Savage Photography

The Arts Education Program at the Juvenile Justice Center is a project of the Alameda County Arts Commission, presented in partnership with the Alameda County Probation Department and the Alameda County Office of Education. Program implementation and coordination is conducted by Community Works West. The Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center and the Arts Education Program were established by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors with the opening of the Juvenile Justice Center in 2007. The Alameda County Arts Commission's Arts Education Program is supported by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, the Alameda County Probation Department, the Alameda County Office of Education, the California Arts Council, and tax deductible donations given through the Foundation for the Arts in Alameda County.

About the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center and the Alameda County Arts Commission

Following the opening of the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center in 2007, the Alameda County Arts Commission established the Arts Education Program. Working in partnership with the Probation Department and the Alameda County Office of Education, this program brings professional artists into the detention facility to work with the detained youth. The visual and performing arts programs are integrated into the school-day curriculum as well as the after-school programs. This program is based on the belief that the arts are an essential part of every successful and thriving community. Viewing and creating artwork can help all young people, families, and community members understand diverse perspectives and common experiences as well as imagine individual transformation and future opportunities.

The Arts Education Program was founded with an initial budget of \$300,000. These funds are being used for the first three years as seed money to establish the program. The funds were generated from the County's "2% for Art" public art ordinance. The Alameda County Arts Commission is seeking new funders to support this program. Donations to support this program can be made through the Foundation for the Arts in Alameda County, a private nonprofit organization created to support the programs of the Arts Commission.

The Alameda County Arts Commission is a division of the County of Alameda. Alameda County, California's sixth largest county, occupies 813 square miles on the east side of the San Francisco Bay Area. 1.8 million people live in the Alameda County cities and communities of Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Castro Valley, Dublin, Emeryville, Fairview, Fremont, Hayward, Livermore, Newark, Oakland, Piedmont, Pleasanton, San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Sunol and Union City. The Juvenile Justice Center is a state of the art facility that includes a 360 bed detention facility with an adjacent Court Facility that houses 5 court rooms and offices for the District Attorney, Public Defender, Behavioral Health Care, Court Clerk, Sheriff, and Probation Department. The detention facility is a short-term, secure, residential facility for youth between 12 to 18 years old, where the average length of stay is 23 days. The day-to-day regimen is built on youth development principles including daily reflection, academics, health education, behavioral services, and the arts. Youth are also preparing for the inevitable transitions they face: reuniting with their families, moving on to additional treatment, or being placed in group homes or other outside facilities.

The Alameda County Arts Commission is dedicated to improving the quality of life in Alameda County by nurturing a thriving environment for the arts and for cultural activities; promoting economic opportunities for Alameda County's artists and arts organizations through programs such as arts grants, public art, and arts education; encouraging public participation in the arts; and actively advocating for the arts.

For more information about this project or to make a donation to support this program, please contact

Rachel Osajima, Executive Director
Alameda County Arts Commission
1401 Lakeside Drive, Suite 603
Oakland, California 94612
Phone 510-208-9646
Email rachel.osajima@acgov.org
Website www.acgov.org/arts

About Venice Arts

What's different about Venice Arts? Youth get to work closely with professional artists in small classes. They have the freedom to dream-up their own projects and learn the skills needed to make them a reality. Their work is exhibited at the Venice Arts Gallery and other community sites.

Youth committed to growing as artists may apply to our Advanced Studies program, where they work on self-directed projects, receive one-to-one mentoring, and build their portfolios for secondary school, art institutions, college, and professional opportunities. They may also be selected to work as a paid Youth Art Intern at Venice Arts or with the Venice Media District.

Venice Arts' year-round education and mentoring programs are offered free-of-charge to low-income families at our Center in Venice and throughout Los Angeles in partnership with schools, parks, human service agencies, and public housing developments.

A vibrant community arts and media learning hub.

Our Center in Venice is a place where youth from diverse communities can find their voice, broaden their knowledge, and develop their skills; where adults expand their creative skills in photography and learn how to use digital media tools; where novice and accomplished artists exhibit their work; and, where staff incubate new ideas, experiment and innovate in the arts and digital media learning.

Encouraging civic engagement.

Venice Arts' Social Art Initiatives—conducted locally, nationally and internationally—serve as a catalyst for people of all ages, living in low-income or underrepresented communities, to create and share personal and community stories through photography, film, and multi-media.

At our Institute for Photographic Empowerment, jointly run with the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership, we support the study and practice of participant produced projects in photo, film, and digital media, and serve as a resource for people from around the globe—photographers, filmmakers, academics, researchers and project participant—to share ideas, learn from one another, and develop the field.

www.venice-arts.org | 310.578.1745 | info@venice-arts.org

Proudly supported by: The California Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, and multiple foundations, corporations, and individual community members. The Photographs exhibited at the 2008 Women's Conference represent work by youth participating in Venice Arts' documentary projects in Los Angeles, nationally, and internationally. Themes explored through their photographs include female identity, race and ethnicity, and immigration, among others.

California Poetry Out Loud 2008 Winner

Roshawnda Bettencourt

Placer County student Roshawnda Bettencourt of Oakmont High School took first place in the highly competitive California's Poetry Out Loud state finals in 2008 and competed in the national competition in Washington, D.C. on April 27-29. This year marks the third time the California Arts Council has produced the Poetry Out Loud competition, a contest that encourages high school students to learn about poetry through memorization, performance, and competition of classical poetry. The program was started by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation, and is fulfilled in the states by the state arts agencies. Local arts agencies and school districts implement the program on the county level.

"I was astounded, not only at the savvy choice of poems that each competitor chose, but at the emotional maturity and poise these students exhibited today," said California Arts Council Vice Chair Malissa Feruzzi Shriver and a judge in 2008 state finals for California Poetry Out Loud. "Not only were these pieces performed well, but the students understood them deeply, on a truly profound and emotional level. They were all so fantastic it was almost impossible to be a judge."

Roshawnda, now attending Sacramento State University, was a senior at Oakmont High School in Roseville (Placer County) when she won. She had been actively involved in acting and theater since her sophomore year, and was on the "Comedy Sports Team," Oakmont's own improv comedy group connected to the school's theater department. She also played basketball (team captain in 2007-08) and track and field (specializing in the high jump, long jump and triple jump).

She got involved in Poetry Out Loud when her sophomore English teacher and her theater arts teacher (Judy Geduldig and Samantha Howard, respectively) encouraged her to explore applying her theatrical talents to poetry. She says that after the county finals she started working both her teachers and established mentors from California Poets in the Schools. "I got a much better understanding of the poetry after the county finals and with the coaching from everyone."

Roshawnda says that the Poetry Out Loud competition gave her the ability to stretch her theater chops in a different way. "I love being on stage in front of an audience and getting them to listen to you with the poetry. I really liked getting into people's minds and embodying somebody new and make an audience think."

She plans to continue with both theater and sports in the future. "I want to make some kind of difference in people's lives, and be happy doing it," she said. "I just don't know what that will be yet."

To find out more about Roshawnda, contact Mary Beth Barber, communications director of the California Arts Council, at 916-322-6588 or mbarber@caartscouncil.com. School administrators, teachers and local arts organizations interested in implementing the Poetry Out Loud program may contact Kristin Margolis, literary arts administrator for the California Arts Council, at 916-322-6391 or kmargolis@caartscouncil.com. More information on California's Poetry Out Loud program and links to the nation program may be found on the California Arts Council website at www.cac.ca.gov.

California



Arts Council

Creative California and the California Arts Council

California's Creative Economy

The creative industries in California are essential to the state's economy, from the nonprofit visual and performing arts organizations and museums to the for-profit creative businesses like design, film, multi-media, animation and music. As of January 2008, there are 98,949 creative businesses in California that employ 500,891 people--more than any other state in the nation – and a 14% increase in the number of businesses and a 17% increase in the number of employees since the same time in 2007. (Source: Creative Industries report from Americans for the Arts, using Dun & Bradstreet statistical information.)

“Creative California” can be future global leader

The state is uniquely poised to be a future leader in the world because of the strength of “California Imagination.” Creativity and innovation will be essential components in education and in the workforce as the U.S. competes in the global marketplace. A major study from the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce *titled Tough Times or Tough Choices* emphasized this point. The Commission noted that jobs requiring high skills such as engineering may go overseas to countries like India or China for a lower wage, and what will differentiate the United States will be innovation and creativity -- two qualities that are not simply enhanced by a robust artistic atmosphere, but require it.

Arts Education – Essential to a well-rounded education

The national and state education boards agree that the visual and performing arts (music, theater, dance and the visual arts) are core subjects and need to be taught at every grade level. The arts encourage imagination, creativity, confidence, self-expression and teamwork – great compliments to a strong education in math, science and literacy. Studies show that the amount and consistency of arts education is inadequate in California and the nation, but California is moving to fill the gap. State education funding allocations of over \$100 million in ongoing funding specifically for visual and performing arts education in K-12 schools were included in the state budget and have continued since.

Creative Communities = Healthy Communities

Healthy communities and crime prevention are key issues for many Californians, and arts education programs and arts activities for children and youth not only provide creative outlets and intellectual stimulus for children, but are also supported by advocates like San Francisco Sheriff Michael Hennessy to help prevent youth delinquency and reduce crime. “If kids accomplish something like arts and music, they’re more inclined to not give up later on,” said Hennessy. “I support the arts because I want fewer people in my jail.”

The California Arts Council

The California Arts Council, a state agency, has the mission to advance California through the arts and creativity with an emphasis on children and artistically underserved communities. The agency encourages widespread public participation in the arts; helps build strong arts organizations at the local level; assists with the professional development of arts leaders; promotes awareness of the value of the arts; and directly support arts program for children and communities. Programs include Artists in Schools, Creating Public Value in the Arts, State-Local Arts Partnership, Poetry Out Loud, California's American Masterpieces, and others.

The Arts License Plate

The California Arts License Plate is a specialty plate that has been offered from the Department of Motor Vehicles since 1994. Proceeds from the Arts License Plate represent 60% of the California Arts Council budget and support the agency's programs for children and communities.

Designed by renowned California artist Wayne Thiebaud, the California Arts License Plate is the first and most successful specialty plate program dedicated to the arts in the nation.



For more information, contact Mary Beth Barber, communications director at the California Arts Council, at 916-322-6588 and mbarber@caartscouncil.com.